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Q1

Please enter your name.

Joe Ciresi

Q2

Please enter the House or Senate district for which you are a candidate, ex. H-1, S-1

H-146

Q3**Yes**

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has an obligation to take care of its poorest, oldest and most frail residents through its Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program. Almost 70% of nursing home residents are on Medicaid. However, the state has not met its commitment to these individuals who require around the clock care. Today as the average daily cost of long-term care for a Medicaid resident is about \$250, nursing homes are reimbursed at an average daily rate of only about \$202, creating an average daily shortfall of about \$48 for every Medicaid resident. Pennsylvania's Medicaid reimbursement rate for nursing homes has not been increased in six years, making it one of the lowest Medicaid reimbursement rates in the country. The average annual operating margin for Pennsylvania's skilled nursing providers is now -2.8%. If elected, would you strongly advocate for and support an increase in the annual appropriation for Medical Assistance long-term care and long-term care managed care to increase rates to at least keep up with medical cost inflation (usually between 2% and 2.5% annually)?

Q4

Pennsylvania's legal climate remains a significant contributor to the financial and workforce challenges facing long-term care providers in Pennsylvania. It, in large part, invites out of state law firms to advertise using inflammatory accusations to generate lawsuits, many of which would be considered frivolous. Given the vagaries of jury trials, in almost every case, insurance companies force long-term care facilities to settle such cases for fear of jackpot punitive damage awards that could put them out of business. Many states have enacted liability relief for long-term care providers, and Pennsylvania physicians have had caps on punitive damages at 200% of compensatory damages since 2002. But with no such liability relief in Pennsylvania, it is estimated that liability-related expenses cost the state's Medicaid program more than \$100 million each year. Some nursing homes now pay more in liability-related costs than they do for food-related costs for their residents. In addition, the advertising used by out-of-state law firms to raise concerns about the care provided has had a devastating impact on frontline caregivers. Many have left the profession altogether, while others are attacked in advertisements in local newspapers and on social media channels. If elected, would you support lawsuit abuse reform including capping punitive damages at 200% of compensatory damages for long-term care facilities?

Other (please specify):

I would support this option but, I do feel we would need room for exceptions

Q5

During the Covid 19 pandemic, long-term care providers were faced with unclear and ever-changing guidance from federal and state regulators, the prioritization of hospital and health systems over long-term care, a shortage of adequate personal protective equipment, and staffing challenges exacerbated by illness, transportation and child care disruptions. Even as long-term care providers were going to extraordinary lengths to protect their residents, the nature of a novel virus creates many challenges and provides for an environment ripe for lawsuits. In fact, some law firms are already targeting long-term care facilities and their employees using television and social media. Some have even reached out to caregivers directly through social media platforms. While most states provided medical liability relief for providers delivering care during the pandemic, Pennsylvania refused to expand these protections to providers, placing them at risk of significant settlements or verdicts simply for providing the best care, with the resources available, based on the best information and direction at the time. If elected, would you advocate and vote for legislation providing medical liability relief to long-term care providers for actions taken and care provided during a declared public health emergency (liability protection would not be extended to cases of intentional harm or gross negligence)?

Other (please specify):

This is not a yes or no answer. We must make sure that all of our hospitals and nursing facilities have access to all of the PPE. There is also an obligation from these medical facilities to have what is required of them and appropriate staffing. I would work with my colleagues to make sure that we have everything that is needed to protect all the residents of these facilities.

Q6

Over the past few years, there have been several attempts by some members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly to enact a state false claims act. The intent of this legislation is to reduce fraud and abuse in the Medicaid system and provide budgetary savings to the Commonwealth; however, states already benefit from federal false claims protections and are not required to pay a state share of a qui tam plaintiff's award, thereby securing more dollars for the state. Should Pennsylvania enact a state false claims act and as a result of this act coupled with a qui tam provision, the state would actually receive less money. Furthermore, recent versions of false claims legislation state that fraud is not required to be proven. Pennsylvania already has a Medicaid Fraud unit in the Attorney General's office, an existing anti-fraud statute, and other safeguards against Medicaid fraud and abuse and the Attorney General may participate in any federal false claims action. Any new false claims legislation would further expose this struggling sector to unnecessary legal risk providing incentives for individuals and governments to pursue any mistake or error for significant financial gain. If elected, would you actively oppose and vote against any proposed False Claims Act legislation?

Other (please specify):

I would need to understand the bill better before saying yes. I don't believe in false claims and would lean to helping make the legislation a reality

Q7

Assisted living residences are a combination of housing and supportive services as needed. These communities are widely accepted by the general public because they allow people to age in place, maintain their independence and exercise decision making and personal choice. In Pennsylvania, assisted living residences are not eligible Medicaid providers and are primarily patient or private pay. However, there are situations in which a resident of an assisted living community may no longer be able to afford assisted living and might, in fact, be financially and clinically eligible for Medicaid nursing home care. Oftentimes, the individual is forced to leave the assisted living setting and move to a nursing home where the costs are covered by Medicaid. Legislation has been proposed to permit assisted living residences to participate in the managed long-term care Medical Assistance program known as Community Health Choices. This legislation would allow these individuals to continue to age in place and would allow those eligible to receive Medicaid services in a less costly setting without forcing them to relocate to a nursing home. If elected, would you advocate and vote for legislation permitting assisted living residences to participate as providers in the Medical Assistance Community Health Choices program?

Other (please specify):

This sounds like a wonderful idea but, without all the specifics and who would and wouldn't be eligible I will have to wait to see the bill

Q8

The nursing home industry is one of the most heavily regulated in the United States, second only to nuclear power. Even so, the demand for increased regulation has continued and it is likely it will continue to gain more traction in the wake of Covid 19. The increased burdensome regulations and reporting required of long-term care facilities diverts resources from patient and resident care, the priority of long-term care providers. In many cases, these regulations are imposed without any collaboration or engagement with providers and with little understanding of the actual costs or barriers related to implementing these regulations. Given that reimbursement levels have remained woefully inadequate for the better part of the past decade, providers have had to bear increased costs due to increased regulatory requirements. A number of states have sought to curb unfunded mandates on providers by requiring fiscal analyses be published, requiring that the regulated community be engaged in the development of the regulation and require that the regulation cannot be implemented without accompanying funding. If elected, would you strongly advocate and vote for legislation to prohibit the imposition of unfunded mandates on providers, and if new requirements are deemed necessary and have a cost, they cannot go into effect unless funding is appropriated or approved to cover the full costs projected to be incurred by the provider?

Other (please specify):

Unfunded mandates are an issue in so many government regulations. I have been a strong advocate for public education reform and have spoken many times on unfunded mandates. That being said it is not black and white to say if the mandate is not funded you need to eliminate it. I feel we need to work together and develop a true list of mandates that will help make the industry work more efficient, be a safer environment for the residents and employees., safer for the employees, and

Q9

In order to become a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) in Pennsylvania, an individual must complete 120 hours of training - a combination of in-person classroom and onsite clinical training - before sitting for the state certification exam. Many prospective CNAs are not able to forego their current income in order to take full-time classes and are more likely to consider becoming a CNA if more flexible educational options existed. Many states allow for online CNA training and during the Covid 19 pandemic, Pennsylvania allowed for the hiring of temporary nurse aides who had completed only online training and an online exam. If elected, would you advocate and vote for legislation to authorize the Department of Education to certify blended (a combination of online and clinical experience) CNA training programs as an additional option for students wishing to pursue a career as a CNA?

Other (please specify):

Again, I am very strong support of CNA's and Nurses. My niece is a CNA and my sister is a nurse but, this question can not be a yes or no without knowing all the issues that are involved.